

REMARKS

Summary

This Amendment is responsive to the Office Action mailed on February 21, 2003. Claims 1, 7, 8, 12, 18, 19, 23, and 24 are amended. Claims 6 and 17 are cancelled. Claims 1-5, 7-16, and 18-24 remain pending.

The Examiner has indicated that claims 6-8 and 17-19 contain allowable subject matter.

Claims 1, 3, 5, 12, 14, 16, 23 and 24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sugisaki (US 5,535,275).

Claims 4 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sugisaki in view of Schroeder (US 3,784,743).

Claims 2 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sugisaki in view of Thompson (US 5,185,794).

Claims 9-11 and 20, 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sugisaki in view of Thompson.

Claim 22 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sugisaki in view of Bando (US 5,774,548).

Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections in view of the amended claims and the following comments.

Discussion of Amended Claims

Applicants have amended the claims herein in order to accept the allowable subject matter indicated by the

Examiner. Although Applicants do not agree that the references cited by the Examiner anticipate or render obvious the invention set forth in claims 1-5, 9-16, and 20-24, the Applicants have chosen not to argue the applicability of these references at the present time.

In particular, claim 1 is amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 6. Claim 6 is cancelled to avoid duplication of claimed subject matter. Claim 12 is amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 17. Claim 17 is cancelled to avoid duplication of claimed subject matter.

Claims 7, 8, 18, and 19, each of which contain allowable subject matter as indicated by the Examiner, are amended into independent form.

Claim 23 is amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 6. Claim 24 is amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 17.

Each of the pending claims now either includes allowable subject matter or depends from a claim which includes allowable subject matter. Applicants respectfully submit that the presently pending claims are therefore in condition for immediate allowance.

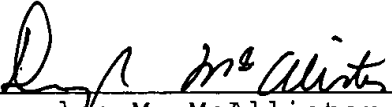
Further remarks regarding the asserted relationship between Applicants' claims and the prior art are not deemed necessary, in view of the amended claims and the foregoing discussion. Applicants' silence as to any of the Examiner's comments is not indicative of an acquiescence to the stated grounds of rejection.

Withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is therefore respectfully requested.

Conclusion

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider this application, allow each of the pending claims and to pass this application on to an early issue. If there are any remaining issues that need to be addressed in order to place this application into condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to telephone Applicants' undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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